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Iran Warns Arabs On Support of Iraq

U.S. General Tours Persian Gulf Area

By Richard Homan
Washington Post Foreign Service

Iran, reportedly strengthening its hold on two widely separated portions of Iraqi border territory, warned Arab states of the Persian Gulf yesterday to end their support for Baghdad or become the target of Iran's "military option."

The stepped-up warning from Iran came a day after an ominous protest march in Tehran by about 2,000 students protesting the policies of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in the 5½-year-old war between Iran and Iraq and followed a weekend statement by President Ali Khamenei cautioning Arab and western states, including France, against aiding Baghdad.

As Persian Gulf tension increased, the American general responsible for possible U.S. Army operations there, Lt. Gen. Theodore G. Jenes Jr., held talks that Army officials at Fort McPherson, Ga., where Jenes is based, called "routine in nature."

Jenes, commander of the Army component of the U.S. Central Command, conferred in Abu Dhabi yesterday with the United Arab Emirates chief of staff after visiting Qatar for what were officially described there as "friendly talks," Deutsche Presse-Agentur reported.

Officials at Fort McPherson said Jenes was "traveling with a small official party" on a trip that gives him "an opportunity to meet with U.S. civilian and military officials and foreign counterparts." They would give no details of his meetings or itinerary nor say when the trip had been arranged.

Kamal Kharrazi, chief of Iran's War Information Headquarters, issued the warning to Arabian Peninsula states in a meeting with journalists in Tehran, Reuter reported.

"Our present policy is to persuade the supporters of [Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein that it is in

the interest of peace and the region to give up supporting Saddam and let him fall," Kharrazi said.

"We would like to solve our problems in the region through diplomatic channels. This we can do for only a limited period. If it fails we shall naturally choose the military option," he added.

Since beginning its current offensives against Iraq a month ago, Iran has also applied increasing pressure on the oil-rich, conservative Arabian Peninsula states. In the past five years, these countries—fearing a militarily strong Iran—have given Baghdad billions of dollars, as well as logistical and political support.

Khamenei, at Friday prayers in a leading Tehran mosque last week, condemned the Gulf Cooperation Council—the grouping of Arab states, under Saudi Arabia's leadership—for the "unstinting support it has given to the Iraqi regime."

Referring to what he said were reports that France might increase its naval presence in the gulf, Khamenei warned Paris not to "threaten us in the Persian Gulf" and said that, if necessary, Iran would strike back.

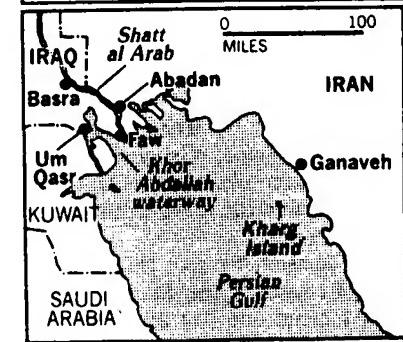
In the fighting yesterday, there were contradictory claims from both sides that could not be confirmed independently.

Iran claimed that its forces have dug in on Iraq's Faw Peninsula, at the head of the Persian Gulf, and 220 miles to the north, expanded their hold on a mountainous, largely Kurdish border area, turning back a counterattack by Iraq, United Press International reported from Tehran.

In Baghdad, Iraqi officials said their forces were making progress in an all-out campaign to drive Iranian invasion forces from the Faw Peninsula, and they said Iraqi warplanes had bombed Iran's oil pipeline terminal at Ganaveh, on the eastern coast of the gulf, Deutsche Presse-Agentur reported.

A western source with access to satellite reconnaissance photos of the southern fighting front said yesterday that the Iraqi Army, despite very rainy weather that has hampered use of its artillery and air support, was continuing a buildup of forces south of Basra, Washington Post correspondent Loren Jenkins reported from Rome.

But this source described Iraqi forces as still about 10 miles from Faw and only "inch[ing]" toward it, apparently trying to avoid heavy casualties and waiting for better weather.



THE WASHINGTON POST

Kharrazi said that in the month-long offensives, Iran has captured 488 square miles of Iraqi territory and "destroyed" 17,000 to 18,000 Iraqi troops—casualty figures disputed by Iraq and considered exaggerated by western observers.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International accused Iraq of widespread human rights violations, including arrests of approximately 300 children last fall—and the torture and killing of some of them—in Sulaimaniyah, near the site of Iran's current offensive in the Kurdish region.